. How can you define a 21st century learner? There are many traits that answer this question, and I will paraphrase John Seely Brown’s, *Learning in a Digital Age*, as my initial approach to this question. Students of this century like to be in control, have choice, be inclusive and work well collaboratively. In addition, they are risk takers, think differently, use digital technology in multiple facets of their daily lives and often view life as uncertain To elaborate, they take technology as ever changing, so they accept it, adapt to it and use it. This helps them to become time managers and problem solvers by finding which type of technology will give them the components to the successful reach the answer. \* 21st century learning is more individualized and is student centered. Identifying interests in the student and creating lessons to fit those needs is required to develop the 21st century learner.

As I continued to read *Learning in a Digital Age,* I discovered a correlation to video gaming and the 21st Century learner. A gamer sets well-defined goals, has patience, can work well as a team and adapts easily to change. Also while gaming they see immediate consequences, patterns and personalize the game to benefit the outcome.

As stated by John Wilson, Vice Chair of 21st Century Skills Partnership, he believes we are defining essential skills too narrowly, “As our nation focuses on the basics, it is noteworthy that government, educators, and private industry are unified in the underlining the 21st Century skill must be part of today’s basics.” *(21st Century Skills: Will our Students be Prepared? 10/15/2003 Judy Salpeter)*

While many education, business and government leaders concur with the importance of technology as a tool for the 21st century teaching and learning, this realization contrasts sharply with what is happening in a number of states and districts. They are scrambling to respond to budget cuts and accountability pressures. “Unfortunately,” says Margaret Honey, vice president and director of EDC’s Center for Children and Technology, “in the schools that have the most pressure on them to improve test scores, technology often takes a back seat, along with arts or anything else that is seen as peripheral” ( *21st Century Skills: Will our Students be Prepared? 10/15/2003 Judy Salpeter)*

John Bailey, director of the U. S. Department of Education’s Office of Educational Technology, stated at a conference,” that standardized tests only measure a few of the critical skills. It is important the a standardized tests measure essential skills” so again John Wilson states,” that he is optimistic that technology will help us find ways to more effectively utilize assessment both for identifying overall achievement patterns as well as for helping individual students learn. Devising these much-needed quality quality assessments must be a priority of our policymakers.” (*21st Century Skills: Will our Students be Prepared? 10/15/2003 Judy Salpeter)* I agree that we must help our policymakers see that standardized testing is not the highest priority. We have students that score well on these tests, but can’t critically think or work collaboratively, so these skills need to be taught and assessed as well. Many colleges have said these are essential skills needed beyond the classroom and so we must be incorporating these into our everyday curriculums.

As teachers, we have many responsibilities. We need to have a flexible mindset, be open to change and not always be in control. Our lessons need to integrate technology as well as increase global awareness. Our students need to master skills, but they also need to better learn those subjects to deal with real world challenges, rather than simply “reproduce” it on test. Students developing competencies such as: critical thinking, problem solving, communicate and collaborate, create new processes and adapt to change, will give them an edge in the real world. (Craig Jerald, The Center of Education)

He stated (Craig Jerold) that automation, globalization, corporate change, risk and responsibilities are the major forces reshaping skills demand. Automation increases production, globalization gives opportunities to those who can work for companies overseas and still collaborate out of the office. Corporate change eliminates many of the supervisory positions, therefore incorporating more self -managing teams and collaboration to complete projects. This is important for teachers to help shape our students to be marketable in the work place.

We need to stay current in technology trends and be willing to embrace those trends. Many seasoned teachers will have difficulty with this, because of intimidation and lack of structure. *(What is 21st Learning*, Eric Thompson) I find this to be exhilarating! As I began incorporate some of these processes into my classroom, the attitude of learning changed, and my students became so excited to learn and see what the next day would hold. As I made subtle changes I believe the material became more relevant and therefore, more engagement happened. Our job is to facilitate the learning and point in the right direction. Our students of the 21st century need to find the answers on their own and know it is ok if they don’t always get it correct. Let’s put our student in control of their learning!

In my research on Web tools I discovered hundreds of them. It was amazing to see how many simple things are creatively designed by web tools. I have worked with Google, Netflix and Teacher tube. Google is a quick way to search for answers you don’t know or to get more information on prior knowledge. It is easy to access on your I pad or smartphone. Netflix streams movies to enhance the content being taught. Netflix would connect with evaluating on the Blooms Taxonomy chart. Teacher tube is students and teachers created videos on numerous topics in your curriculum. This applies the concept using catchy raps and songs as well as terminology that is student friendly. This website I specifically used with math and divisibility. We watched the video and learned the rap, then continually practiced so divisibility was just like tying their shoe.

Next year I will have a smartboard and am looking forward to utilizing the PhEt website. It is loaded with interactive smartboard activities for math and science. Upon researching this site and trying some of the activities, I plan to use the fraction interactive activities and demos. Fractions are difficult to most students and showing each step on the smartboard. Letting them move and create fractions on their own will help with this concept.

Another tool I am excited to use is Storyjumper and Storybird. We have a poetry unit and will create poetry books. With Storyjumper we will still hand write our poems, then begin putting them together with this tool. This will enhance our reading curriculum. I am also planning to write individual books this year and will have them create books in the computer lab using this tool. This will encourage less creative students to produce a quality book, alongside their classmates.

Incorporating more formative assessments is my challenge. I want to do more formative assessments in all curriculum areas. Using Bubblus for webmapping in science will help to incorporate concepts and terms, therefore associating all the content and making it less confusing. I did a few web maps last year and the students were challenged by the multiple ways concepts and terms could be linked. Every map was different, but each group was able to explain why they created their map the way they did. We then adapted this to the outside world. Another challenge for me will be to change the standard book written tests into more open–ended thought provoking questions. After all the reading on formative assessments, relating the content to real life, gives the students purpose and makes it more meaningful. I want to create that connection to prior knowledge and link the content to real life situations.

I would also like to use Rubister, although not that familiar with it yet, I have been creating some basic rubrics to get the hang of it. I know this can be a powerful tool for assessing writing and reading. I am hoping to incorporate rubrics into my Literature Circle group evaluations. I have a smaller class next year, so this will be a nice way to begin transitioning for a larger class the following year. Having the students create some of these animated web tools will be challenging as we are limited on technology. I will schedule computer time to introduce Powtoons, Animoto and Prezi, so they can create concept reviews at home. I will also partner them up to make some during open computer time, so I can oversee and answer questions. Let’s turn knowledge into power and help introduce some of these tools that will be expected in high school and college.

The last 6 weeks have been challenging for me because I am not very web literate. I feel fortunate to have a group of learners patient and knowledgeable to help me discover how beneficial technology is in the classroom, as well as some wonderful new resources to help me implement these new methods. My classmates have shared so many wonderful websites and resources. I need to take baby steps as to not overwhelm myself and my students. However, I plan to take risks and encourage my students to move out of their comfort zone. My continuation of growth will be to continue following twitter, join a few teacher blogs, and incorporate various web tools into my curriculum.